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A

POETICAL EPISTLE

F R O M

K Dodington
The late LORD MELCOMBE

T O

The EARL of BUTE:

W I T H

C O R R E C T I O N S,

By the Author of the NIGHT THOUGHTS.

L O N D O N :

Printed for T. BECKET, Corner of the Adelphi, in the Strand.

M D C C L X X V I.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE distinguished NAMES on the Title-page can excite no Expectations in the Public which the Poetical Merit of the following Epistle is not capable of gratifying. It bears Date the 26th of October 1761. To preclude every Doubt, concerning it's Authenticity, the Original Manuscript, in LORD MELCOMBE's Hand-writing, with the Corrections, in THAT of Dr. YOUNG, is left for Inspection at the Shop of the Publisher.

P R O E M I U M.

POLLIO, to Thee, my Patron and my Friend,
The secret counfels of my soul I send:
Long since thy godlike Uncle* held me dear
(Fate gave me early to thy House's care);
He dy'd, and left me unattach'd and free,
Left me a legacy from Him to Thee.

Mem'ry, rare gift! but giv'n us to our cost,
Thou faithful Register of Good, when lost!
Trace ev'ry feature of the fav'rite piece,
Revive his Grace, his Dignity, and Ease;

* JOHN Duke of ARGYLL.

¹ Each feature of the fav'rite picture trace,
Recall his Ease, and Dignity, and Grace;

A

His

His Courage cool, his Wisdom void of art,
 The gentlest Manners, and the warmest Heart ;
 His Soul with ev'ry ¹ *noblest* passion fraught,
 And ² *carrying* Friendship sometimes to a fault ;
 In Arts or Arms, in Battle, or Debate,
 He guarded, grac'd, and dignify'd the State ;
 Deserv'd the Laurel and the Bay that crown
 The ³ *blended* honours of the Sword and Gown ;
 His Country's Bulwark, her Delight and Pride,
 In War he conquer'd, and in Peace he dy'd :
 His Mem'ry shall to latest times descend.
 Such was the Man ⁴ *that* bade me call him Friend.
 And now let Envy all his actions scan,
⁵ *Then let her call me Flatt'rer, if she can :*
 The vain reproach I shall with scorn receive ;
 I wanted no distinction He could give,

¹ nobler

² pushing

³ distant

⁴ who

⁵ Then, brand me for a Flatt'rer, if she can :-

Save one, ¹ to all superior and supreme,
His Friendship, his Affection, his Esteem.
 Oh! long and much belov'd, ² Oh! dearly mourn'd,
 How often has my throbbing bosom burn'd
³ Th' effusions of a grateful heart to pour
 O'er sacred Friendship—⁴ now, alas! no more.

Ere long, my gentle Friend, will come thy turn
⁵ To drop a pious tear on my poor urn;
 Thy feeling heart will not the task decline—
 The virtues of Humanity are thine:
 But tho' from Friendship's source the Passions rise
⁶ That flood the Soul, and swell into the Eyes,
 Th' effect will differ, tho' the source the same;
⁷ My tear is Gratitude, but Thine is Fame.

¹ ————of all Distinctions the supreme!
 His Friendship, and, more precious! his Esteem.

² sincerely

³ The fulness

⁴ ————Friendship now no more!

⁵ To check a tear, or drop it on my urn;

⁶ Which melt

⁷ My tear paid Gratitude, but Thine gives Fame.

Farewel, illustrious Shade ! for ever rest
Distinguish'd in the Mansions of the Blest !

¹ *From thence, while, darkling, we thy Star survey,*
Thy bright Example marks and lights the way.

'Tis well.—The throbbing of the heart subsides,
The blood begins to flow in sprightlier tides :

² *From Thee, my Friend, the soul with joy surveys*
The Page of Mem'ry mark'd with brighter days ;

³ *From Thee---thy Mien, thy Manners, and thy Smile*
Recall the gen'rous, graceful, brave ARGYLL.

⁴ *Thus own'd by Thee, thus Client of thy Race,*
Where could I else, with Dignity or Grace,

From ev'ry Prejudice and Passion free,
Lay bare the Mind's Receffes, ⁵ but to Thee ?

¹ Thence let thy bright Example's brilliant ray
To Wisdom point, and light us on our way.

² By

³ By

⁴ By Thee thus own'd, a Client of thy Race,
Where could I with such Dignity or Grace,

⁵ as

Often,

Often, as from the pomp thy state requires,
 To Contemplation's cell thy Friend retires,
 Fast by the banks of Thames, his active mind
 Dwells on the motley mask he left behind :
 So far the wide Society extends,
 So num'rous those ¹ *we call from Custom Friends* ;
 Yet, num'rous as they are, so very few
 Wish what they ought, or as they ought pursue,
 He scarce can tell what the ² *whole* Drama means,
³ *Can* fix the Plan, or separate the Scenes ;
 All would be great, but who with Care attends
 Whence Greatness springs, it's Progress, and it's Ends ?

How to direct their wand'ring footsteps right,
 Or place their Errors in a stronger light,
 And mark the Failings that mislead the Throng
 Thro' Life, shall be the Subject of my Song.

¹ ———kind Custom calls our Friends ;

² dark

³ Or

Often, as from the porch thy face appears,
 To Contemplation's cell thy friendly voice is heard;
 Fast by the banks of Thames, his active mind
 Dwells on the grandest work his art has wrought;
 So far the wide Society extends;
 So runs the stream, and from Clarendon flows;
 Yet, numerous as they are, in very few are found
 With what they ought, or as they ought to be;
 He scarce can tell what the Society's true state is;
 'Tis the Plan, not the persons, the Society's fault;
 All would be great, but who will be the great?
 Whence Greatness springs, its Progress, and its End;
 How to direct their wandering footsteps right,
 Or place their efforts in a strong light,
 And mark the Pathings that mislead the strong
 This, like, shall be the subject of my Song.

—And Custom calls our friends—

dark

Or

A N

E P I S T L E.

POLLIO, to Thee ; thy well-conducted youth
Has form'd thy mind to hear and follow Truth ;
From Thee the crowds that Wisdom's laws despise
May learn that none are happy but the Wise ;
That Wisdom blunts the darts Misfortune flings, 5
And lifts to noblest heights Ambition's wings.

What then is Wisdom?—'Tis what gilds Success,
What makes it solid, infelt Happiness ;
What keeps th' enlarg'd pursuit to Virtue true,
And sinks the selfish in the social view.

10

Say

Say then, bright Guide ! since thy ¹ *celestial* beam
 Lights us, thro' Social Happiness, to Fame ;
 Say, whence the gen'ral Groan, th' ensanguin'd Plain,
 The ² *purple Murd'rer* striding o'er the Slain,
 Sweeping half Human Kind from Nature's face, 15
 And forging fetters for the rising race ?
³ *Whence then, and why*, the Venal and the Vile,
 The Voice of Honour, ⁴ *and* the Heart of Guile,
 Harden'd to crimes, and resolute to rise
 On ⁵ *Love and Friendship's* violated ties ? 20
 The mad Voluptuary ? the selfish Drone,
 That stifles Merit, ⁶ *struggling* to be known ?

From CUNNING ;---CUNNING, ⁷ *that* deforms the mind,
 Poisons the soil for noblest growths design'd ;

¹ auspicious

² royal Butcher

³ Say, whence, and why,

⁴ but

⁵ holy Friendship's

⁶ ardent

⁷ which

Blasts Heroes' Laurels, ¹ *blights* the Statesman's Bays; 25
 Cunning o'erturns the Throne she means to raise,
 Corrupts the Heart, contracts the Social Plan,
 And ² *narrows* to Self-love the Love of Man :
 By That the Soul, ³ *in* prey to mean desires,
 Her flight obstructed, and impair'd her fires, 30
 Panting for Glory, anxious to be great,
⁴ *Moyls* thro' the paths of Baseness and Deceit ;
 But still, tho' Fortune all her aid should lend,
 She finds the Means have overturn'd the end ;
⁵ *Sbrinks at* the servile Croud and brib'd Address, 35
 And sickens in the bosom of Success.

Wouldst thou, my Friend, survey with ⁶ *stricter* ken
 These Rival Rulers of the Sons of Men ?

¹ withers

² strangles, or smothers

³ a

⁴ Toils

⁵ She loaths

⁶ closer

We'll analyse their complicated frame,
 And show their Pow'rs, their Passions, and their Aim;
 How they dispense to Mortals Good or Ill, 41
 And how affect the bosom ¹ *that* they fill.

WISDOM's the Health and Vigour of the Mind,
² *That* flows from ev'ry talent, justly join'd;
³ *Where Judgment tempers Wit's enliv'ning blaze,* 45
And Genius quickens what Reflection weighs.
 Parent of Peace, and Guardian of the Brave,
 And teaching how to conquer and to save;
⁴ *She wars on Vice alone, and her decree*
Draws not the sword to fetter, but to free; 50
 Her arms bid social Arts and Science rise,
 And ⁵ *Victory shed* blessings as she flies.

¹ which

² It

³ From Judgment temp'ring Wit's excessive blaze,
 And Genius bright'ning what Reflection weighs.

⁴ Draws not the sword to fetter, but to free,
 And Vice alone is slain by her decree;

⁵ Conquest scatter

If to a narrower sphere her cares descend,
¹ *She gives* the Father, Citizen, and Friend,
 Th' indulgent Husband, and th' endearing Wife, 55
 And all the tender Charities of Life.

² *These gifts, then, flow from Wisdom's high command:*
 She makes the Vanquish'd bless the Victor's hand;
³ *To raise, to dignify* an humble state,
 Or fits the Robes of Greatness to the Great: 60
 She leads where Virtue calls, and Fame attends.

CUNNING's the tim'rous Guide to sordid Ends:
 Compos'd of parts which Wisdom calls Defects,
⁴ *She apes* her with the talents she rejects:
 Hence one proceeds with Firmness, one with Fear; 65
 There manly Caution, low Suspicion here.

¹ Her's is

² What rich gifts flow from Wisdom's high command?

³ Adorns and dignifies

⁴ And

'Tis like false coin, by Cheats invented first,
 The best materials 'copy'd with the worst;
 Like that, it makes the wealth of Knaves alone,
 And brings as sure destruction when 'tis known. 70

As Lib'ral Arts and Love of Virtue fail
 In Courts, the Cunning o'er the Wise prevail.

The crowds that Vice and Vanity pour forth,
 Whose claims are founded on their Wants, not Worth,
 Ill brook the manly manners of the Wise, 75
 Who scorn to flatter what they must despise.

Where solid Worth first forms the fair pretence,
 Upborne by Probity, enforc'd by Sense;
 Where virtuous Toil must earn what can't be fold,
 And Genius pants for Glory, not for Gold; 80
 Where Brib'ry Birth, Cabal, neglected wait,
 And Wisdom's hand unbars Preferment's gate,

: mimick'd

This

This tribe th' unhospitable mansions shun,
 And to th' all-courting dome of Cunning run ;
 Run to th' important shrug, th' unmeaning hint, 85
That Cunning ever coins in Falshood's mint ;
 To warm Professions, strangers to the mind ;
 To Speech, th' Interpreter of Truth design'd,
 Now taught not to discover, but disguise,
 While the whole Man, each Look, each Gesture lyes, 90
 With all the train of ineffectual cant,
 To soothe, not satisfy---to lure, not grant.

Here the gay scenes with smiles perpetual strike,
 All smooth, all flatt'ring, and all false alike ;
 Infidious Praise extols, while Envy burns, 95
 And feign'd Attachments meet with feign'd Returns ;
 The garb of Worth distress'd cloaks Squandring's tribes
 That Int'rest may seem gen'rous when she bribes :
 Patron and Client, turn by turn, deceive,
 Ask from false motives, from false motives give ; 100

Which

Ill-founded

Ill-founded all, Pretension, Promise, Grant,
Nought real, but Profusion, ¹ *Brib'ry, Want.*

Thus Prudence, Virtue, Parts, crowd Wisdom's train;
Thus Cunning sweeps the ² *Squand'rer*, False, and Vain:
Just to the Tiller's care, the crop succeeds, 105
One binds the sheaf, and one collects the weeds.

³ *By this we see how far the distance lies,*
How wide, that parts the Cunning from the Wise.
Hear, then, her Voice, whose comprehensive call
Extends to the Great Vulgar and the Small. 110

When Men unfit for Greatness will be Great,
⁴ *Why don't they trust to Title and Estate?*
What Dæmon, envious of their Peace and Fame,
Drives them to make the Care of States their aim;

¹ Bribe, and Want.

² Lavish,

³ By this we see, and see without surprize,
The Cunning far divided from the Wise.

⁴ Why trust they not

To quit the shade of private life, and stray 115
Where ev'ry weakness glares in open day ?

Whoe'er in life mistakes his destin'd place
Becomes ¹ *the* Author of his own Disgrace ;
For Heav'n bestows on All sufficient skill
To grace the station which they ought to fill ; 120
And, tho' to All not equally profuse,
Ordain'd us All for Decency and Use.
² *Hast thou not Wit ?* be gen'rous and sincere :
³ *Does Learning fail ?* let Social Love appear ;
Let Truth, Good-nature, Virtue, be improv'd, 125
And, since thou canst not be admir'd, be lov'd.

Had Nature's bounty partially been shown,
And barr'd up ev'ry road to Fame but one,
'Twould seem less strange to see th' unequal strife
That drives us all to shine in Public Life ; 130

¹ sure

² Is Wit deny'd ?

³ Fails Learning too ?

¹ *How Thirst of Pow'r o'er All alike prevails,
And calls in Vice to aid, where Genius fails.*

Is Private Life, then, void of graceful aims ?
Are Father, Husband, Friend, ² *ungraceful* names ?
So far ² *ungraceful* that we rather chuse 135
Pow'r, we want Genius to become or use ?

The rule that leads us with unerring pace
To tread the various paths of Life with Grace
(Let Genius fire the blood, or Damps restrain)
Confin'd to precepts obvious, easy, plain, 140
Alike thro' ev'ry rank, for practice fit,
To guard the plain good Man, and grace the Wit,
Thro' Court, Camp, Cottage, heard, felt, understood,
Consist in this---be honest, just, and good :
This, well observ'd, shall shield the Weak from blame,
And lend Defects themselves a softer name : 146

¹ Less strange, that Thirst of Pow'r o'er All prevails,
And calls to Vice for aid, when Genius fails.

² ignoble

Neglect of this debases all our thoughts,
And heightens all our Failings into Faults.

Failings and Faults from diff'rent springs proceed;
Faults from the Heart, and Failings from the Head. 150
Quick to discern, and wisely to pursue,
And tread Life's labyrinth with Judgment's clue,
Are parts that few, indulg'd by Heav'n, can fill;
But all Men may be honest—if they will.
This Wisdom's laws, ¹ *that* first taught Virtue, teach,
And place Esteem and Love in all Men's reach. 156

Her Guardian Influence then, ² *severely kind*,
Which diff'rent pow'rs to diff'rent parts assign'd,
And, thro' the whole impartial and exact,
Ne'er deals the part without the pow'rs to act, 160
Gave Honesty, her gen'ral gift and best,
To guide, support, and dignify the rest.

¹ which

² to none unkind,

To Genius this secures immortal Fame,
 And consecrates Ambition's boldest aim ;
 Without it all the sparks of heav'nly fire, 165
 Or blaze destructive, or in smoke, expire,
 Giv'n to distress Mankind, and not to save:
 Thus the same Sword, ¹ *that*, wielded by the Brave,
 In Virtue's cause, has sav'd a sinking Land,
 Does Midnight Murder in a Ruffian's hand. 170

If WISDOM, then, to All those pow'rs imparts
² *That lead alone* to Fame thro' Arms or Arts,
 And sows, with bounty free and unconfin'd,
 The seeds of Honesty in ev'ry mind,
 Which, vary'd by the soil, yet must produce 175
 Or Private Peace of Mind, or Public Use,
 (That Use which consecrates the Patriot's dust,
 That Peace of Mind which ever crowns the Just) :
 Then boldly let the Muse this truth proclaim,
 Wisdom's the source, and Honesty the stream, 180

¹ which,

² Which lead us on

That wafts us safe, thro' Danger and Distress,
 To Public Fame, or Private Happiness;
 While Cunning weaves a maze without a clue,
 And, ¹ *wav'ring*, grasps False Greatness for the True.

See the foul monster, of gigantic size, 185
 On broken Faith and injur'd Friendship rise,
 Fearful and rash, rapacious and profuse,
 In Temper rigid, and in Morals loose;
 By smiling Treach'ry led, with downcast eyes,
 And prompted by Suspicion, whisp'ring lyes; 190
 See Ribald Mirth, and Begg'ry void of shame,
 Demure Detraction, and loud-bawling Blame,
² *Chos'n Friends!* by Int'rest rank'd, in order stand,
 And Flatt'ry next, with Falshood in her hand;
 Riot and Guile the wild procession ends, 195
 And what Oppression gains Corruption spends.

¹ purblind,

² These Fiends,

Descend a moment from this fancy'd height,
 And view the treach'rous scene by Wisdom's light ;
 This pageant Pomp, this Homage of an Hour,
 This painted Grandeur, this unweildy Pow'r, 200
 Shall shrink, when Truth displays her piercing beam,
 Like the vain visions of a fev'rish dream,
 Which promise Health and Youth for ever gay,
 But yield us back to Death at break of day :
 So soon shall ill-got Greatness change it's state, 205
 Turn'd to Reproach, Contempt, and Public Hate.
 Proceed, and think what balm can cure the breast,
 Where Guilt has enter'd once, and banish'd Rest :
 If we have Friends, what Friendship can we trust,
 That knows us mean, ungen'rous, and unjust? 210
 If we have Foes, how grateful to those Foes
 To see us toil against our own repose !
 Such is the fate of Greatness built on Vice,
 Remorse the purchase, Innocence the price.

When Wisdom's eye surveys the guilty Great, 215
 They move our Pity, rather than our Hate :

I know they scorn the tricks by which they rise,
 And view their ill-got Pow'r with joyless eyes ;
 They scorn the Prince on whom that Pow'r depends,
 They scorn their Slaves, and most they scorn their Friends.

Friendship well chose, of ev'ry blessing chief, 221
 Doubles our Pleasures, and divides our Grief :
 But view their Friendships, can we call them Choice ?
 No ; 'tis Necessity, impos'd by Vice,
 Which, vile and weak itself, must always seek 225
 For safety from the Wicked and the Weak :
 Vileness must on the Villain's aid depend,
 To plan fresh mischiefs, and the past defend ;
 And Weakness trusts the Weak, thro' jealous care,
 As Impotence with Eunuchs guards the Fair. 230
 But let this truth into thy mind descend,
 The Man that makes a Fool or Knave his Friend,
 Whate'er pretence may seem his choice to guide,
 Has crimes to perpetrate, or crimes to hide.

True Greatness, sure, unfolds a nobler scene, 235
 Without majestic, and within serene ;
 On

On Wisdom's height sublime, securely plac'd,
 She plans new glories, and enjoys the past;
 And, while the blasts of Rage and Faction blow,
 Hears the Storm rave and Thunder roll below : 240
 There, high enthron'd, with silent joy surveys
 Whole Kingdoms lift their hands in grateful praise;
¹ Or soaring still (tho' pleas'd with deathless Fame)
² Extends, perhaps, beyond one World, her aim.

'Tis her's to plead the suff'ring Orphan's cause, 245
 And dry the tear that stern Oppression draws;
 To call each latent seed of Virtue forth,
 And ³ kindle modest Diffidence to Worth.

If gentle Slumber o'er her eye-lids creeps,
 The Pray'rs of Nations guard her as she sleeps ; 250
 If Cares the fetter'd Sense from Sleep unbind,
 Those Cares ensure the Quiet of Mankind :

¹ And

² Ne'er fails beyond our World to stretch her aim.

³ wind up

She knows no guilty pang, no secret shame,
 No start of horror from the midnight dream ;
 But, wrapt in pleasing thought, with ravis'd eyes 255
 Sees Public Good on proud Oppression rise ;
 And, watchful o'er the blessings of her hand,
 Wakes, like the Guardian Angel of the Land.

Is there a Land, ¹ *that* such a Guard can claim,
² *By Virtue's tut'ring hand, borne up to Fame?* 260
 Where sacred Liberty each breast inflames,
 And Wealth and Life itself are second names ;
³ *That* dares, when Tyrants strike, repel the blow,
 And lay the mighty Sons of Ruin low ;
⁴ *That* once, tho' safe herself, by Heav'n's decree, 265
 Dar'd fight and conquer, to set Europe free ;
 And, starting at her captive Neighbour's groan,
 Stepp'd forth, and made the glorious cause her own.

¹ which

² Led by fair Virtue to the mount of Fame?

³ Which

⁴ Which

Is there where Learning may securely soar,
 Uncurb'd by Churchmen, unconstrain'd by Pow'r; 270
 Where free Devotion wears an open face,
 And Reason leads her to the throne of Grace;
¹ *Sincere, tho' various, and to none a Slave,*
But God is worship'd by the lights he gave?

Is there a Prince, intrepid, just, and wise, 275
 Who views his People with a Father's eyes,
 And, pleas'd to guard that Right which Nature gave,
 Scorns to debase a Subject to a Slave?
 Should his bright Influence fill the courtly sphere,
 And Courtiers dare be honest and sincere; 280
 Serve, tho' they promis'd; feel, tho' they profess;
 Nor check the Social Virtues of the Breast.

Should Truth ² *usurp* suspicious Falshood's feat,
 And Honesty grow graceful in the Great;

¹ Tho' various, unconfus'd, to none a Slave,
 It's God adoring——

² ascend

Should Wit presume to speak, and Learning write, 285
 And Pow'r and Lib'ral Arts at length unite;
 Pronounce that Land the fav'rite Land of Fate,
 Pronounce the Prince ¹ *that* rules it truly great.

Smit with true Glory's charms, thus far the Muse
 With eager steps the shining track pursues; 290
 Strains ev'ry nerve to raise the fav'rite theme,
 And fix fair Glory in the blaze of Fame:
 'Tis her's to praise True Greatness on the Throne,
 'Tis thine, O GEORGE! to make that Praise thy own.

¹ who

F I N I S.

Should we pretend to speak, and Learning

And Power and Labors as things vain;

Profoundly that Land the lowly and of

Profoundly that Prince, what is it truly great

Count with our Obedience, thus in the

With that the shining way, but

Stains every heart to take the

As, his fall Glory in the

The last of the Time

To him, O Obedience, to make that

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